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# CBC RESEARCH

Canada, Canadián Broadcasting Carpondian Research report, No. 1152

THE VIEWS OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS

IN CANADA ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE

PRIESTHOOD



FROM THE OFFICE
OF THE

BC20 -69V36

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#### INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the results of a recent survey of the attitudes of Roman Catholic priests in Canada on a variety of issues related to the priesthood. The purpose of the survey was to provide information that would form the basis for discussion in an upcoming program in the CBC English TV network's 'Man Alive' series. This program is now scheduled for Monday October 13, at 10:30 to 11:00 pm, on the full English TV network of CBC and affiliated stations.

The questions asked are reproduced on the following pages. These, together with certain other questions relating to the respondent's age, type of work, place of residence and whether 'diocesan' or a member of a religious order, were included in a bilingual questionnaire (copy attached) which was mailed to some 12,000 priests listed in the 1969 Le Canada ecclésiastique, a listing believed to include the names of all Roman Catholic priests in Canada.

To date some 3,680 completed questionnaires have been returned. This level of response is lower than we would have wished; it approximates the usual level of response to questionnaires on subjects of general interest mailed to the population at large. In this case the lower-than-expected level of response appears to be at least partly attributable to the inadequacy of the mailing list which, notwithstanding its 1969 designation, in fact proved to be somewhat outdated.

The characteristics of those priests who <u>did</u> return completed and usable questionnaires are shown on the following page. There is unfortunately no easy way of determining the extent to which this distribution reflects that of the Canadian population of priests as a whole.

The tabulated replies to each of the questions asked are shown as Exhibit I (pages 7-21). These are given in each case for all respondents and, separately, for those who replied in English and those who replied in French, for the 'diocesan' and 'religious' categories of priests, and for four separate age groups. In each case, percentages are based on the numbers of respondents actually answering the question.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF THOSE RETURNING COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES<sup>1</sup>

parameters of a first first from the same state of						
	ENGLISH		FRENCH		TOTAL	
TOTAL	1505		2174		3679	
		%		%		%
AGE			-			
Under 35 35-44 45-54 55+ No information	299 496 373 331 6	20 33 25 22 *	470 654 492 542 16	22 30 23 25 1	769 1150 865 873 22	21 31 24 24 *
REGION						
Maritimes Quebec Ontario Prairies B.C. Other No information	225 155 631 368 77 26 23	15 10 42 24 5 2	101 1789 173 89 5 4	5 82 8 4 *	336 1944 804 457 82 30 23	9 53 22 12 2 1 *
Diocesan Religious No information	863 633 9	57 42 1	1321 834 19	61 38 1	2184 1467 28	59 41 *
English French	1505		2174		1505 2174	41 59

Here, and in later tables, percentage figures are given to the nearest whole number and hence do not, in all cases, add to 100. The mark \* signifies less than 1 per cent.

#### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The topics covered fall under five main headings - the relationship between priests and the laity; the role, function and training of priests; attitudes toward authority, tradition and freedom; the rule of celibacy; and the question of women priests.

## 1. Priests and Laity

The first three questions in the questionnaire touched on this subject; on two of these questions there was no clear consensus of opinion.

Indicating the extent of their agreement or disagreement with the statement "Most parishioners have a real appreciation of the issues and concerns which confront priests today" (Question 1), 41 per cent of respondents agreed, 45 per cent disagreed, and the remaining 14 per cent were undecided. None of the available data allow us to identify the <u>source</u> of this disagreement. The division of opinion is the same among those with diocesan responsibilities, as among members of religious orders. There is, it is true, some tendency for French-speaking respondents to be more satisfied in this respect with their parishioners than are their English counterparts, but the difference is not great.

Question 3 put forward the proposition: "In general, the laity is more resistant to the changes now taking place in the church than is the clergy." Again there was no overall consensus: 48 per cent agreed, 32 per cent disagreed, and 19 per cent were undecided. Older priests seemed more inclined to agree with the statement than younger priests but, here again, the difference is not marked.

However, there <u>is</u> agreement on that vicarious link between clergy and the laity - the mass media. An overwhelming 74 per cent majority felt that the mass media, in general, do not present an accurate picture of the contemporary clergy (Question 2).

#### 2. Role, Function and Training

There was widespread agreement that "among the clergy today, there is confusion about their role and function" (Ouestion 4). 72 per cent felt this, with just 19 per cent feeling there was no confusion. The remaining 9 per cent were undecided. On this issue there was no difference between diocesan and religious priests. The older he is, however, the more likely is a priest to disagree with the statement, even though in all age groups a clear majority hold this view.

In spite of this confusion about role, most respondents nonetheless seemed to feel that their education and training had adequately equipped them for the demands of their profession today (Question 5). There was some tendency for members of religious orders to feel this to a greater extent than did their diocesan counterparts, but the difference was not substantial. Of much greater interest is the tendency of younger priests to feel more dissatisfied with their education and training than do older priests - this in spite of the fact that the younger priests have presumably finished their training more recently. The percentage agreeing that their education and training did not adequately equip them for today's professional demands rises from 21 per cent among those priests aged 55 or more, to 43 per cent among those aged 34 or less.

## 3. Authority, Tradition and Freedom

In general, the authority structure of the church is not felt to inhibit a priest from developing his own ideas and capacities (Question 6). Only 27 per cent feel this. Again (Question 8), most priests do not apparently feel that they are required to cope with too many controls and regulations. Only 38 per cent feel that they are. A sizable 46 per cent minority feel that "the traditional language and concepts that the church uses to define orthodoxy seriously impedes the communication of the faith today" (Question 7). Likewise, 41 per cent feel that the church should permit more freedom in the matter of liturgical experimentation (Question 9).

Who constitute this 'sizable minority'? They are not disproportionately diocesan or religious. There are no significant response differences between these two groups in this respect. They tend marginally, however, to be more 'English' than 'French' - especially on the issue of the inhibiting effect of authority referred to in Question 6. Their main characteristic, however, is their youth. The following table illustrates this point:

	Per cent 'strongly or 'agi	agreeing'
	Under 35	Age 55 and over
Statement		
The authority structure of the church inhibits a priest from developing his own ideas and capacities	35	17
The traditional language and concepts that the church uses to define orthodoxy seriously impedes the communication of the faith today	56	30
In the exercise of ministry the priest has to cope with too many controls and regulations	45	29
The church should permit more freedom in the matter of liturgical experimentation	61	20

However, in spite of this 'generation gap' (which may or may not be a <u>new</u> phenomenon), all groups combine to endorse the proposition of Question 10 that "the National Conference of Bishops should be given many of the juridical powers presently centralized under the Roman authority system of the church". 83 per cent agree on this.

# 4. The Rule of Celibacy

Questions 11, 12 and 13 dealt with the church's current discipline on celibacy. The responses to these questions are more difficult to interpret than those in any other section of the questionnaire; this is because as many as 20 per cent of respondents did not answer them. In what follows, we treat only those who did answer these questions.

A very large 84 per cent majority of those respondents agreed that, "in preparing for the priesthood, I was able to make an authentic personal decision in accepting the celibate life" (Question 13). In addition, a 59 per cent majority agreed that "though it may have inherent defects, the present discipline on celibacy makes an important statement about the nature of the priest's vocation which an optional celibacy rule would not do" (Question 11).

However, when it comes to specifics (see Question 12), there appears to be a fairly widespread desire for change. 47 per cent of respondents disagreed that "the rule of celibacy should be maintained in its present form". The direction of the change required seems to be that it should be optional for the secular clergy (56 per cent agreed to this), but not for religious orders (only 12 per cent feel that celibacy should be optional for members of religious orders). Interestingly, this is the consensus both among those who are themselves diocesan and among those who are themselves members of a religious order.

As might be expected, dissatisfaction with the current role of celibacy is most pronounced among younger priests. As we move down the age scale there is a sharp increase in the consensus for change. English-speaking priests are also slightly more in favor of change than their French-speaking counterparts.

## 5. Women Priests

Finally, a clear 60 per cent majority disagreed that women should eventually be admitted to the order of priests (Ouestion 14). However, it is interesting to note that almost a quarter of all respondents (24 per cent) had an open mind on the subject. Among the younger age groups about a third were undecided on this issue and 23 per cent in favour.

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## EXHIBIT T

TABULATIONS OF REPLIES TO INDIVIDUAL OUESTIONS

The distributions in these tables are shown in percentages, the numerical bases for which have been omitted for sake of clarity but are separately available (see reference on page 1). These percentages are given to the nearest whole number and hence do not. in all cases, total 100. The mark \* signifies less than 1 per cent.



QUESTION 1

"Most parishioners have a real appreciation of the issues and concerns which confront priests today?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
State of the second sec	%	%	%	%	%
ALL RESPONDENTS	9	32	14	40	5
English	5	27	13	46	9
French	12	36	15	36	2
Diocesan	10	33	12	39	6
Religious	7	31	17	41	5
Age: Under 35 33-44 45-54 55+	7 8 10 10	30 30 33 35	12 13 14 17	44 44 39 33	7 5 4 5

QUESTION 2

"In general, the mass media present an accurate picture of the contemporary clergy?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	7	7
ALL RESPONDENTS	2	16	9	57	17
English	1	15	9	51	25
French	2	16	9	62	11
					\$ 1 1
Diocesan	2	17	9	56	16
Religious	1	14	9	50	17
Age:				1	
Under 35	2	17	11	55	15
35-44	1	19	8	57	15
45–54 55+	2 2	14 12	8	58	18 18

QUESTION 3

"In general, the laity is more resistent to the changes now taking place in the church than is the clergy?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	7,	%	%	%	7.,
ALL RESPONDENTS	0	40	19	50	3
English	5	41	21	29	4
French	9	40	17	30	3
				- The state of the	
Diocesan	8	40	17	31	4
Religious	7	41	22	26	3
Age:					
Under 35	7	34	23	32	5
35-44	8 7	38	19	32	3
45-54 55+	9	44 45	17 18	29	2 3
	9	47	1.0	24	J

QUESTION 4

"Among the clergy today there is confusion about their role and function?"

	trongly isagree
7. % % % 7.	%
21   51   9   16	3
17 51 10 18	4
23 51 8 16	3
21   51   8   16	4
20 51 9 17	3
	2
14 53 10 19	4
11 45 11 27	6
14 53 10 19	

QUESTION 5

"My education and training did not adequately equipme for the demands of my profession today?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	7,	"/ '
ALL RESPONDENTS	9	24	10	41	16
English	9	30	10	33	17
French	8	20	9	47	16
Diocesan Religious	10 6	26 22	11	39 44	14
Age: Under 35 35-44 45-54 55+	13 10 7 5	30 27 23 16	11 10 9 8	37 40 43 45	9 13 18 25

QUESTION 6

"The authority structure of the church inhibits a priest from developing his own ideas and capacities?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	0
ALL RESPONDENTS	7	20	10	45	17
English	10	24	12	37	17
French	6	17	9	50	18
				1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	The second secon
Diocesan	8	22	11	43	16
Religious	6	18	10	47	19
				Millioner de	The state of the s
Age:					
Under 35	9	26	14	39	11
35-44	10	24	12	43	13
45-54 55+	6	17	9 7	49	19 27
				4)	6-1

QUESTION 7

"The traditional language and concepts that the church uses to define orthodoxy seriously impedes the communication of the faith today?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	7/6	7.	7/
ALL RESPONDENTS	12	34	13	32	()
English	13	37	13	29	9
French	11	33	13	35	3
Diocesan	11	34	14	33	8
Religious	13	35	13	31	9
					97 97 97 97
Age:					
Under 35 35-44	17 14	39 40	15 14	23 27	5
45-54	9	33	12	37	9
55+	6	24	11	44	15

QUESTION 8

"In the exercise of ministry the priest has to cope with too many controls and regulations?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	7.
ALL RESPONDENTS	9	29	11	41	9
English	10	33	12	36	9
French	9	26	11	45	9
Diocesan	10	28	11	42	9
Religious	. 9	31	12	40	8
Age:					
Under 35	12	33	14	34	6
35-44	11	32	12	39	6
45-54 55+	8 6	29 23	10 10	43 49	10 13
	Ŭ	J	J. U	72	

QUESTION 9

"The church should permit more freedom in the matter of liturgical experimentation?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ALL RESPONDENTS	12	29	12	35	12
English	11 .	31	12	33	13
French	12	27	11	37	12
Diocesan Religious	11	28	12	36 35	13
Age:	22 15 6 3	39 34 25 17	.14 13 11 8	19 31 45 47	6 7 13 25

# QUESTION 10

"The National Conference of Bishops should be given many of the juridical powers presently centralized under the Roman authority system of the church?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	76	%	%	7,
ALL RESPONDENTS	38	45	7	7 .	3
English	<b>3</b> 8	45	6	7	4
French	38	45	7	7	3
Diocesan	40	44	5	7	3
Religious	36	45	9	8	3
Age:					
Under 35	58	36	4	· 2	
35-44	44	44	6	4	2
45-54 55+	31	49 49	8	8 15	3 7
337	21	49		13	,

# QUESTION 11

"Though it may have inherent defects, the present discipline on celibacy makes an important statement about the nature of the priest's vocation, which an optional celibacy rule would not do?"

	Strongly Agree Agree Agree Disagree		Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
	"/	/_	7,	/	·,
ALL RESPONDENTS	23	36	11	22	,Q.
English	17	42	10	20	10
French	27	32	11	23	7
Diocesan	21 .	36	11	23	7
Religious	25	38	10	20	7
Age: Under 35 35-44	14 16	28 34	13 14	32 26	13 10
45-54 55+	25 38	44 40	7	18 11	, ,
J)+	30	40		1.1	,

".. The rule of celibacy should be..."

	Strongly	A	Neither	Diagram	Strongly
	Agree	Λgree	Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Disagree
	7,	%	%	7/	,
"optional for	the secular	clergy?	.11		
ALL RESPONDENTS	24	32	9	18	17
English	26	39	8	16	11
French	23	28	10	10	.2.1
Diocesan	27	31	8	17	1.7
Religious	21	33	11	19	16
Age:	1	27	0		
Under 35 35-44	39	37	8	8 12	8
45-54	17	33	9	24	16
55+	9	22	7	28	34
"optional for	members of	religiou	s orders?"		, home was no no no na vision ne man come na
ALL RESPONDENTS	5	7	9	34	45
English	8	9	10	33	40
French	4	6	8	34	48
Diocesan	6	8	12	30	37
Religious	4	7	4	30	55
Age:		1			1
Under 35	6 7	11 8	13	29	41
35-44 45-54	5	6	7	38	44
55+	2	4	5	32	57
"optional pri	or to ordina	ition onl	<u>y</u> ?''	.1	
ALL RESPONDENTS	6	17	13	38	26
English	5	16	14	41	25
French	6	18	12	36	27
Diocesan	6	16	12	39	27
Religious	6	19	14	36	25
Age:		1		1	1
Under 35	7	17	13	37	26
35-44 45-54	()	16 21	15 12	40	23
55 <del>+</del>	5	17	10	35	24

OUESTION 12 (continued)

"The rule of celibacy should be ..."

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
The state of the s	χ	7.	7,	9/	Ψ,	
"optional bef	ore and afte	er ordina	tion?"			
ALL RESPONDENTS	19	27	9	23	22	
English	22	32	9	22	16	
French	17	23	10	25	26	
Diocesan	22	27	9	22	20)	
Religious	14	26	1()	26		
Age:					1	
Under 35	28	32	12	16	12	
35-44	24	30	11	20	14	
45-54	15	27	7	30	21	
55+	6	16	7	29	42	
"maintained in	n its preser	nt form?"				
ALL RESPONDENTS	24	18	11	27	20	
English	19	19	10	28	24	
French	28	17	12	26	17	
Diocesan	25	16	11	27	22	
Religious	23	21	11	27	13	
Age:				1	† †	
Under 35	11	8	12	34	35	
35-44	14	15	13	33	25	
	25	24	10	26	14	
45-54	23	27	1 1	20	4.7	

QUESTION 13

"In preparing for the priesthood, I was able to make an authentic personal decision in accepting the celibate life?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
ALL RESPONDENTS	48	36	5	8	3
English	39	43	5	8	4
French	54	31	4	7	3
Diocesan	47	36	5	9	3
Religious	50	37	4	6	3
Age: Under 35 35-44 45-54 55+	39 40 50 63	40 38 38 30	7 6 2 2	9 11 7 3	4 4 3 2

QUESTION 14

"Women should eventually be admitted to the order of priests?"

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
ALL RESPONDENTS	4	12	24	23	37
English	4	12	23	23	38
French	4	12	25	23	36
Diocesan	4	12	24	23	36
Religious	4	12	25	23	37
Age:  Under 35 35-44 45-54 55+	5 6 3 2	18 13 10 7	33 27 21 15	21 23 25 24	24 31 40 51



#### QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE INDICATE, WITH AN "X" IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX, THE EXTENT TO WHICH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING:

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Most parishioners have a real appreciation of the issues and concerns which confront priests today.					
2.	In general, the mass media present an accurate picture of the contemporary clergy.					
3.	In general, the laity is more resistant to the changes now taking place in the church than is the clergy.					
4.	Among the clergy today there is confusion about their function and role.					
5.	My education and training did not adequately equip me for the demands of my profession today.					
6.	The authority structure of the church inhibits a priest from developing his own ideas and capacities.					
7.	The traditional language and concepts that the church uses to define orthodoxy seriously impedes the communicating of the faith today.					
8.	In the exercise of ministry the priest has to cope with too many controls and regulations.					
9.	The church should permit more freedom in the matter of liturgical experimentation.					
10.	The National Conference of Bishops should be given many of the juridical powers presently centralized under the Roman authority system of the church.					
11.	Though it may have inherent defects, the present discipline on celibacy makes an important statement about the nature of the priest's vocation, which an optional celibacy rule would not do.					
12.	The rule of celibacy should be:					
	a) optional for the secular clergy.					
	b) optional for members of religious orders.					
	c) optio					
	d) opt	AO NNOT SOM	27.3			
	e) / Historia dud as	NO NOTE ASV.	7 1d			

Nous vous remercions d'avoir répondu aux questions, Si vous voules faire plus de remarques sur les problèmes qui confrontent l'Eglise aujourd'hui, nous vous prions de les partager avec nous:

	Arth	Britannique		setriard sed		L'Ontario	re drepec	semitiman s	97
_		 ATOMOTOO -W	- Innered		_		40	and the old o	- I

### QUESTIONNAIRE

VEUILLEZ INDIQUER, PAR UN "X" DANS LA CASE APPROPRIEE, A QUEL POINT VOUS ETES OU NON D'ACCORD AVEC LES IDEES SUIVANTES:

		Tout à fait d'accord		Ni pour,	Pas d'accord	Tout & fait contre
1.	La plupart des paroissiens apprécient bien les questions et les soucis qui confrontent les prêtres aujourd'hui.					
2.	Em général, les organes de communication présentent une image vrais de la situation contemporaine du clergé.					
3.	En général, les laïques résistent plus que le clergé aux changements qui se passent maintenant dans l'Eglise.					
4.	Chez le clergé aujourd'hui, il y a une confusion en ce qui concerne leur fonction et leur rôle.					
5.	Mon éducation ne m'a pas préparé pour les exigences de ma profession aujourd'hui.					
6.	La structure d'autorité de l'Eglise ne permet pas qu'un prêtre développe ses propres idées et sa capacité.					
7.	Le language théologique et les concepts qu'emploie l'Eglise dans la définition du crédo orthodoxe empêche serieusement la communication de la foi dans le monde d'aujourd'hui.					
8.	Dans l'exercice de son ministère, le prêtre doit faire face à trop de contrôles extérieurs et trop de règlements.					
9.	L'Eglise devrait permettre plus de liberté dans l'expérimentation liturgique.					
10.	Le système d'autorité de l'Eglise Catholique doit être décentralisé pour donner aux conférences nationales desévêques plus de pouvoir juridique.					
11.	Malgré quelque défaut qui puisse être inhérent à la discipline actuelle, le célibat fait une déclaration importante et de valeur significative à propos de la nature de la vocation du prêtre, ce qu'une règle de célibat facultatif ne pourrait pas donner.					
12.	Le célibat doit être:					
	a) facultatif pour le clergé séculier.					
	b) facultatif pour les membres des ordres religieux.					
	c) facultatif avant l'ordination seulement.					
	d) facultatif avant ou après l'ordination.					
	e) conservé dans sa forme actuelle.					
13.	En me préparant à la prêtrise j'ai pu prendre une décision personnelle authentique en acceptant la vie célibataire.					
14.	Eventuellement, les femmes doivent être admises au sacerdoce.					
Nous	aimerions obtenir aussi des renseignements sur vous et	votre travai	1.			
15.	Indiquez s'il vous plaît le groupe d'âge auquel vous ap	partenez:				
	34 et plus jeune 35-44 45-54	55 et p	lus 🔲			
16.	Veuillez indiquer le travail principal que vous faites administrateur diocésain, professeur, etc.):		easteur d'u			
17.	Veuillez indiquer si vous êtes diocésain ou re	ligieux 🗌				

18 Dane qualle mission demounes wave?





